

VZCZCXRO1560
PP RUEHCN RUEHGH RUEHVC
DE RUEHSH #0142/01 2250406
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 130406Z AUG 09
FM AMCONSUL SHENYANG
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8797
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE
RUEHVK/AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK 0738
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC 0201
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J2 SEOUL KOR
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC 0146
RUCGEVC/JOINT STAFF WASHDC 0106
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC 0161

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SHENYANG 000142

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/K, EAP/CM, INR
MOSCOW PASS TO VLADIVOSTOK

E.O. 12958: DECL: TEN YEARS AFTER KOREAN UNIFICATION
TAGS: [CH](#) [ECON](#) [KN](#) [KS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: PRC-DPRK BORDER: HARDLY ANY NEW REFUGEES AT ALL

REF: A. SHENYANG 90
[1](#)B. SHENYANG 119
[1](#)C. SHENYANG 56

Classified By: Consul General Stephen B. Wickman. Reasons 1.4(b)/(d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Contacts in the PRC-DPRK borderlands indicate that as of August 2009, there are virtually no new DPRK refugees crossing the Tumen River with the goal of settling in China (Ref A) but that the area is home to many refugees from the late 1990s, not a few of whom have integrated into Sino-Korean society. The Chinese government may turn a blind eye to North Korean refugees in their territory but remains on the alert for foreign journalists and others who seek to cover these stories in a negative light. Back in Shenyang, all of the refugees currently at the South Korean Consulate made it there with the help of paid brokers. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) ConGenOff traveled to the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture August 2-9 to discuss various issues, including North Korean refugees crossing the Tumen River into China.

UNDERGROUND RAILWAY: FEWER AND FEWER PASSENGERS

[1](#)3. (C) On August 6, ConGenOff met with Zhao Guangxe (protect), the Catholic priest responsible for the Longjing City and Helong City parishes. Zhao, a Sino-Korean from Longjing, ran the Hunchun City parish in the early 2000s when he said he constantly helped North Korean refugees. Zhao said that to his knowledge there were almost no refugees coming across the border these days and that if they were still coming, they were not staying in Yanbian. He contrasted this observation with his experiences in Hunchun during the first part of the decade, when he regularly housed and fed North Korean refugees.

[1](#)4. (C) Zhao said that various Catholic orders were free to operate in Yanbian, offering social services when the official state system was unable to provide them. Zhao said that the Salesians of Don Bosco were able to pursue their order's goal of adolescent rehabilitation and education, as a "house of last resort," for troubled and disadvantaged youth. Foreign priests hailing from Italy, South Korea, and Canada had been able to accomplish their missions. When asked what kind of support the Chinese government offered to these groups, Zhao laughed, and said that he would love to see the day when the Chinese government could offer financial support to religious groups.

15. (C) On August 8, ConGenOff met with a Sino-Korean pastor from Longjing who tends to a poor, mostly Han Chinese congregation on the eastern outskirts of Yanji City. As recently as 2006, this individual had helped run refugee safe houses in Yanbian and traveled to North Korea to administer aid. However, he said that the last couple of years had been marked by a sharp dropoff in North Korean refugees seeking shelter in Yanbian. The pastor joked that the dropoff was followed by the appearance of PRC citizens posing as DPRK refugees in an effort to obtain aid.

16. (C) A Sino-Korean businessman working in Tumen City and a frequent traveler to North Korea (Ref B) said on August 8 that there were virtually no recent North Korean refugees. He said there were many North Korean refugees left over from the late 1990s and early 2000s who had long since integrated into Chinese society but who still took pains to keep a low profile, working in restaurants and menial jobs. He said that, in order to send more money to relatives in North Korea, some of these refugee women resident in China had taken to engaging in "escort" services. Women would seek long-term relationships by targeting well-to-do Chinese businessmen and government officials. Zhao said that these women had directly contacted some of his acquaintances, asking for USD 2500-3000 up front in cash to "sponsor" them as long-term companions.

TODAY'S REFUGEES USING BROKERS AND FOLLOWING FAMILY MEMBERS

17. (C) Shenyang ROK Consul Kwon Tae-han said on July 22 that the ROK Consulate in Shenyang was now home to 19 North Korean refugees, including a 14-month old baby, down from

SHENYANG 00000142 002 OF 002

previous highs but still a burden. Kwon is a fluent Chinese speaker and a former police officer, having worked for the Korean National Police Agency, specializing in counter-narcotics and Sino-Korean and DPRK refugee crime rings.

18. (C) Kwon said that today's refugee profile is markedly different from that of the past, largely because of the central role that money and brokers play in facilitating movement across the PRC-DPRK border (Ref B). All of the North Koreans at the ROK Consulate had made it to Shenyang with the assistance of a broker. Kwon also cited that the majority of the 19 North Koreans were not new refugees escaping from hunger or other systemic shocks, but were the relatives of earlier refugees resident in Seoul who arranged for their exit. These refugees often expected a hero's welcome and a land of opportunity upon arrival in South Korea, but were dismayed to find how difficult it would be to pay their broker's fees - in excess of the official South Korean government's payout now given to such refugees.

19. (C) Wu Jianhua (protect), a government specialist on North Korea and PRC-DPRK issues at the Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences, said on July 21 that the main reason that North Koreans who may be willing to defect did not do so was because they feared that their family members left behind would be subjected to undue hardship. When pressed, Wu said that the punishments were not severe or life-threatening, but that the remaining family members would be marked as "unreliable," thus hampering future opportunities.

110. (C) For those who had chosen to leave North Korea in the earlier part of the decade, Wu said that it was quite easy for the children of PRC national fathers and North Korean women to obtain a hukou (residence permits) and that he knew of several from border villages who were now studying in Yanji. An NGO worker in Tumen City said that he also knew of a few children of PRC national fathers and North Korean women born in border villages who had received hukous without too much trouble; the parents were working at restaurants or engaged in manual labor in Yanji City.

CHINESE PSB STILL WARY OF FOREIGNERS, NEGATIVE REPORTING

¶11. (C) ConGenOff met with Mr. Lee Gyeong-hee (protect) on August 7 to discuss expatriate life in Yanbian. Lee is a Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) investigative journalist with over 20 years of experience studying Chinese at the Yanbian University of Science and Technology (YUST) in advance of his upcoming assignment as the KBS Beijing foreign correspondent. Lee was impressed by the Public Security Bureau's (PSB) ability to track and stop potential problems, citing an example which involved two Seoul-based KBS reporters in June.

¶12. (C) Lee said that KBS had recently tried to send two reporters to Yanbian to cover DPRK refugee issues and that the reporters, first-time travelers to China, successfully obtained tourist visas at the Chinese Embassy in Seoul. As soon as the two reporters arrived in Yanji on the direct flight from Seoul, however, they were greeted by PSB personnel and escorted to a room, where they were informed that while they would not be deported the two would be watched closely and were advised to refrain from any non-tourist activity. The reporters left the next day en route to Mongolia. Lee deplored the fact that his editorial staff did not prevent this kind of unnecessary encounter, especially in the wake of the incident involving the two American journalists (Ref C).

¶13. (C) Lee said that in a recent dinner with the Yanbian Prefectural PSB Deputy Director, the Director said he "would like nothing more than to close YUST as soon as possible," adding that the presence of so many South Korean and other foreign nationals engaged in DPRK-related and religious work was an unwelcome irritant.

WICKMAN